

LASSEN COUNTY JUVENILE DETENTION FACILITY

Reason for Inquiry: California Penal Code § 919(b) mandates that the Grand Jury “Inquire into the condition and management of all detention facilities within their county.”

Inquiry Procedures: The Grand Jury met with Letha Martin, Lassen County Chief Probation Officer; and Ken Crandall, Lassen County Mental Health Director. The Grand Jury toured the Lassen County Juvenile Detention Facility (LCJDF) on November 9, 2009.

Background: In June 2000, the original facility was upgraded to accommodate 50 juveniles, but due to budgetary restraints, the facility currently houses only 20 juveniles with no plans of increasing that number. A Group Home has been opened on the other side of the Juvenile Detention Facility renting the space from Lassen County.

Findings: Facility and Placements: At the time of the Grand Jury’s visit, the facility appeared clean and well organized. The staff was cooperative and responded to all questions asked by jury members.

The average length of stay for juveniles detained in the LCJDF is three to four weeks, but juveniles have been detained for as long as fifteen months.

Parents of detained juveniles residing in the LCJDF are charged as much as \$15.00 per day. The charge is based on the parent’s income using a sliding scale. Plumas, Sierra, and Modoc Counties contract with Lassen County to house juveniles at the LCJDF. A per diem rate of \$110.00 for each 24-hour period is charged to those counties for each detained juvenile. A reimbursement charge is also collected for medical, psychological, and educational services. There are a limited number of out-of-county juveniles housed at the LCJDF.

Lassen County also contracts with Crystal Creek Juvenile Detention Facility, the Bar-O-Boys Ranch, and the Fouts Springs Youth Facility for placement of juveniles committed to camp. High-risk offenders are transferred and housed with the California Youth Authority at a cost of \$4,000 to \$6,000 per month.

Security: The LCJDF currently uses video cameras that are placed strategically around the facility to monitor activity. These cameras do not have the ability to record and are only used for monitoring. The LCJDF staff expressed a need for a recording system for the facility, as it would document incidents that occur and would greatly assist with the safety and security of the facility. The LCJDF staff is pursuing funding to upgrade their video system. This issue continues to be brought before the Grand Jury’s attention year after year with no resolution due to budget constraints.

Staffing: The Grand Jury inquired about the current staffing levels at LCJDF. They were in compliance with California Code of Regulation, Title 15, Section 1320 and 1321 in regard to appointment and staffing. Although the facility is being staffed at the required levels, the turnover rate appears to impact their ability to retain experienced detention officers. Lower

wages and benefits in Lassen County compared to other counties seem to be a direct result of staff turnover and lack of staff retention.

Training: All LCJDF staff members receive 20 hours of initial training on site and 170 hours of Core Training at an academy. Additionally, all employees receive a minimum of 40 hours of PC 832.5 off post training per year. With staffing turnover rates, it is a challenge to keep up with required training.

Services Offered: The LCJDF is primarily a housing facility and provides limited rehabilitation programs and services to detained juveniles. The services offered include the following:

Education: The County Office of Education provides a teacher and an assistant who conducts daily classes on site. Individual educational programs are developed and followed for each student. The classroom was furnished as a public school classroom, computer workstations, desks, and bulletin board displaying student's projects.

The students in the education program receive transferable credits for completed classes.

Alcohol and Drug Programs: Lassen County Drug and Alcohol provides an Alcoholic Anonymous counselor and/or volunteer 16 to 20 hours per week.

Health and Dental Care: Medical care is provided daily through a county contract with Dr. Hal Meadows. Dr. Meadows also monitors psychological medications that have been prescribed by Dr. Shep Green of Lassen County Mental Health.

Dental care is provided through a county contract with the Susanville Dental Group.

Commendations: The Grand Jury commends the Lassen County Probation Department, the Lassen County Department of Mental Health, and the Lassen County Juvenile Detention Facility for initiating a program to improve mental health services for detained juveniles.

Recommendations: Security: The Grand Jury recommends that the Lassen County Juvenile Detention Facility staff continue to pursue every course available to secure additional funding for a video recording and monitoring system. The Grand Jury recommends that the Lassen County Juvenile Detention Facility staff look into some vocational trade classes for the juveniles while in the facility, such as a community garden or small engine repair. Additionally, it is recommended that the issue of staff retention be addressed, and efforts to upgrade the pay and benefits for the staff working at LCJDF. The Grand Jury recognizes the Lassen County Supervisor's oversight of the LCJDF budget; however, the issues mentioned in the Grand Jury's recommendations are a note-worthy concern that still has not been addressed.

Response Required: No.